

May 12, 2020

Dear Committee,

My name is Corey Anthony and in 2016 I was sentenced to 121 months in Federal prison for possession of child pornography. From the age of 14 to 21 I had developed an addiction to pornography and during that time had been also looking up child pornography. Once I was caught by the FBI I was so relieved that I could finally get the help I wanted, but before being caught I was unable to get help. Many people who end up caught for this crime have similar stories, most of us feel that we cannot seek help and as such fall into a deep hole of addiction and depression, unable to escape on our own. The thought of telling a friend or family member scares us that they won't understand and will instead turn us in and the same is especially true for Therapists or Psychiatrists. How can we ask for professional help when we believe the people who are able to help us have an obligation to turn us in, rather than help us? As such I was unable to get help for my addiction until I was caught.

After my crime came to light, I eagerly told the FBI I wanted help and immediately got a specialist, whom I am still in contact while incarcerated and will continue to see upon my release. My fears about the Sex Offender Registry have grown since I've been incarcerated and continue to read up on its developments so I know what to expect. I am a Tier 1 offender, who never made contact or attempted to make contact with any minors. All child pornography I downloaded I would soon delete out of shame and guilt and never stored it or collected it. As the laws are, upon my release I will be lumped into the same boat as people with crimes more serious than mine, seeing as how the SOR does not differentiate between individual's crimes severities.

My main concern is that when I am out and on the registry, it will be public, making it hard for me to pursue a normal life. I fear having a job and an angry citizen showing up to harass me, forcing my employers to let me go because of something I had done in my past. This to me feels like an additional punishment that will make it harder to make a living and lead a normal life. My other concern is my name being made public, not showing any specifics about my case and being targeted by angry individuals which scares me more than anything, especially if at that time I have a family.

Before, during, and after my sentencing certain factors about my situation became clear to me about my crime. Pornography is as addictive as crack cocaine and is linked directly to depression in males. Researchers have discovered that there are appropriate and effective mental health treatments that break addiction and ensure recovery much like substance addictions. During my time seeing a therapist before and after sentencing I got help for sex abuse trauma from when I was 12 years old and after coming to prison. I am positive that I can move forward instead of being trapped in the depression I was in before being caught.

Once I got the victim impact statements from my attorney, I read every single one because it's something one should do when they have affected another person and reading them also changed me and helped me to understand their pain. I took responsibility for my actions and understand that what I was doing was wrong and have done everything I am able since to move forward as a better person. Judge Malloney, who was my sentencing judge, went on record to say that I posed no threat to public safety and had never seen anyone take so much responsibility and change so much, then sentenced me to 10 years 1 month in Federal prison. I entered prison the day before my 23rd birthday, May 9th, 2016.

Through my whole incarceration I have had my whole family and my friends stand by me. They have put their love and trust in me and that is something I will take, use to become a better person, and return their love and trust as best I can.

My hopes for the future are these:

1. No public registration for first time Tier-1 offenders (Or reduce the time to 5 years of registration)
2. Allow first offense of possession and receipt of child pornography to be expunged after a reasonable amount of years. The research shows that there is little chance of reoffending with this type of crime.
3. For Younger offenders (under 25 years of age at time of offense) be allowed a diversion program, where the charges are deferred and dismissed if all conditions, like counseling, are successfully completed.

The government's laws and policies such as the Registry and long years of incarceration (especially in the Federal system) are so excessive that they stigmatize the crime and don't make any incentive to get help stopping. People in that situation are too afraid to seek help and get better, many of us wish that there were ways, such as in Canada and several European countries who advertise anonymous help and have lowered their crime rates involving child pornography. Education to showing the danger of pornography addiction.

Please take my words into consideration when writing these bills and applying new laws and policies to the Sex Offender Registry.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read what I have written.

Sincerely,

Corey Anthony